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The Philadelphia Aurora, The New England Illuminati, and The Election of 1800

IN THE summer of 1800 at the height of electioneering for the fall presidential election, William Duane, editor of the Philadelphia *Aurora* and a strong supporter of Thomas Jefferson, informed Ephraim Kirby, a Jeffersonian Republican leader in Connecticut, that "the applications for 'the Aurora' from all parts of New England increase much more than I sometime since could have readily hoped. . . ."[1] This increased interest in the *Aurora* in New England almost certainly stemmed from interest in the national election campaign and in the *Aurora*'s reputation as the nation's leading Jeffersonian organ, but in part it may have also been due to the *Aurora*'s periodic critical examinations of New England politics. Readers of the *Aurora* had noted that over the past year an unusually large amount of space had been devoted to the workings of New England politics and government. The *Aurora*'s interest in New England appeared to be somewhat irregular. Articles focused on New England appeared in spurts. They were unsigned and they treated a variety of topics.

1 William Duane to Ephraim Kirby, July 3, 1800, Ephraim Kirby Manuscript Collection (1775–1804), Duke University Library.

A casual or occasional reader of the *Aurora* might notice only that a column here and an item there examined the political and religious affairs of New England. A regular and careful reader, however, would have gradually become aware of a continuity of theme and interpretation in the hundreds of items and paragraphs about New England's political system. Ephraim Kirby, an *Aurora* subscriber, would have followed the *Aurora*'s discussions of New England with particular interest, for he would have instantly recognized what others might only have guessed. A single anonymous individual was authoring the great majority of the articles which gave the appearance of coming from a variety of sources. Kirby would have recognized the rambling and emotion-charged style of writing. He would have easily seen that the broad indictments being leveled against New England's Federalists and Congregationalists could be reduced to a series of incidents experienced by one individual. Kirby would also have noticed that whenever that individual journeyed to Philadelphia the *Aurora*'s assaults upon New England intensified and whenever that individual left Philadelphia the *Aurora*'s assaults subsided.

As editor, William Duane determined what would appear in his paper, but he did not author the numerous pieces attacking New England. Duane and Kirby were among the few who knew that the author of the great majority of the *Aurora*'s New England articles, and the individual responsible for initiating this line of campaign invective, was an Episcopal clergyman who had lived in New England for almost twenty years, the Reverend John C. Ogden.

John Cosens Ogden, born near Elizabethtown, New Jersey, graduated from Princeton in 1770. Shortly thereafter he moved to New Haven, established a small mercantile business, and in 1776 married Mary Wooster, the daughter of General David Wooster and Mary Clap Wooster, and became a convert to the Anglican Church. In September, 1786, he was ordained an Episcopal deacon and licensed to preach.[2] He thereupon moved his family to Portsmouth, New Hampshire, where he began officiating at Queen's Chapel. A year later in ceremonies at Trinity Church, Boston, Bishop Samuel

2 William Agur Beardsley, "A Registry of Ordination by Bishop Seabury and Bishop Jarvis of Connecticut," *Historical Magazine of the Protestant Episcopal Church*, XIII (1944), 44–71.

Seabury ordained him priest in the first Episcopal ordination to take place in Massachusetts.[3]

Ogden was a man "of a strong and independent cast of mind." A man of firm convictions, he would not shrink from controversy. When, following a 1791 visit by Bishop Seabury to Portsmouth, a sharp conflict developed between Ogden and Congregationalist minister Samuel MacClintock over the Episcopal Bishop's claim to apostolic succession, many members of his own congregation thought Ogden's vehemence in defense of episcopacy immoderate. Within the community and the parish the quarrel developed to the point that it "drew down on him a persecution which obliged him to relinquish his living, and to remove to a situation promising to be more peaceable and secure." Ogden left Portsmouth in January, 1793.[4]

Familiar with the Connecticut River region from occasional missionary work, he decided to settle in Vermont. By the fall of 1795, he had moved west once again.[5] His wife and children returned to New Haven to live with his mother-in-law. Ogden, liable to being jailed for debt in Connecticut, settled in Troy, New York. He later complained that in this period he had been reduced to "the necessity of travelling on foot with a wallet and staff," while "subsisting on a pittance of less than one hundred dollars per annum."[6] His missionary work of organizing episcopal congregations continued, but between 1795 and 1798 a new mission possessed him.[7]

Ogden had been embittered by his experiences in New Hampshire and Vermont. The loss of his Portsmouth church and his failure to gain an income from Anglican glebe lands in Vermont confirmed a belief that the Congregational clergy and their political allies were in league to insure to the established Congregational churches

[3] *Ibid.*; *New Hampshire Gazette*, Apr. 2, 1788.

[4] *Aurora*, Oct. 2, 1800.

[5] Calvin R. Batchelder, "The Church in New Hampshire," *History of the Eastern Diocese* (Claremont, N. H., 1896), I, 272.

[6] Hartford *Connecticut Courant*, May 27, 1799; *Aurora*, Jan. 15, 1799.

[7] John C. Ogden to Samuel Peters, Oct. 26, 1795, and June 25, 1796, The Rev. Samuel Peters Papers, The Francis L. Hawks and General Convention Collection of Early Episcopal Church Manuscripts, Archives and Historical Collections of the Episcopal Church, The Church Historical Society, Austin, Texas.

"permanent establishments in property, and superior advantages as to their support."[8]

For twelve years Ogden had done God's work. His reward was the status of an exile in his own country. The Episcopal Church in New England needed help. The nation needed warning. John Ogden determined to commit his talents to exposing to public view the nefarious designs of New England's clerical and political leadership. The energy which Ogden had devoted to propagating the faith was directed to propagandizing and politicing by 1798.

Ogden's first political pamphlet, *An Appeal to the Candid upon the Present State of Religion and Politics in Connecticut*, appeared in 1796.[9] His second, *A View of the New England Illuminati; who are indefatigably engaged in destroying the religion and government of the United States . . .*, was published in 1798.[10] Ogden's close association with the *Aurora* resulted from Federal Judge William Patterson's October 9, 1798, sentencing of Vermont Congressman Matthew Lyon to four months confinement and a fine of $1,000 for violation of the recent Sedition Act. Ogden, who sympathized with Lyon's political views, felt a special obligation to him due to Lyon's having defended the claims of the Episcopal Church to Vermont glebe lands.[11] When several thousand Vermonters signed petitions seeking a presidential pardon for Lyon, Ogden volunteered to deliver the documents to Philadelphia.

His arrival in Philadelphia in late December, 1798, coincides with the appearance in the *Aurora* of a series of articles on matters with which Ogden was intensely interested: the ill treatment suffered by Matthew Lyon;[12] the injustices done to Mrs. Mary Wooster, his mother-in-law;[13] Yale President Timothy Dwight;[14] the New Eng-

8 John C. Ogden, *A View of the New England Illuminati; who are indefatigably engaged in destroying the religion and government of the United States . . .* (Philadelphia, 1799), 9.

9 Published at Stockbridge, Mass. Other editions were published by T. & S. Green of New Haven, 1797, and Thomas Collier of Litchfield, 1798.

10 Reference to a Thomas Collier edition is made in a letter from Ogden to Ephraim Kirby, Aug. 13, 1798, Ephraim Kirby Manuscript Collection. The 1799 edition was printed in Philadelphia by James Carey.

11 *Aurora*, Jan. 5, 1799. "Colo Lyon has been my benefactor and the general friend to the clergy of every faith," Ogden later explained. Ogden to Washington, Feb. 12, 1799, Washington Papers, Library of Congress.

12 *Aurora*, Jan. 4, 5, 8, 9, 1799.

13 *Ibid.*, Jan. 5, 7, 1799.

14 *Ibid.*, Jan. 9, 11, 19, 22, 1799.

land Congregational clergy;[15] Connecticut politics;[16] and New England's colleges.[17] Ogden and Duane joined forces. From January, 1799, until his death in September, 1800, Ogden would regularly contribute to the pages of the *Aurora*.[18]

The single most influential Republican newspaper in the country, William Duane's *Aurora* circulated widely throughout the middle states.[19] Founded in 1790 by Benjamin Franklin Bache, the *Aurora* had gained prominence as a consistent critic of the Federalist administrations. An assistant to Bache after 1796, William Duane assumed the editorship on November 1, 1798, three months after Bache died of yellow fever.

While Federalists labeled the *Aurora* "that prostitute of newspapers," that "mother of abominations," Republicans referred to it as "the bible of democracy." John Quincy Adams said of William Duane that he was the ablest of Republican propagandists.[20] Under Duane's guidance the *Aurora* is acknowledged by scholars to have been "the leading journal of Republican opinion in the United States," "the most important single Republican paper" of that period, and even "the most influential newssheet in the country."[21]

With national party platforms not yet developed and with Jefferson at Monticello not directing the choice and emphasis of

[15] *Ibid.*, Jan. 11, 19, 22, and Feb. 5, 1799.

[16] *Ibid.*, Jan. 11, 15, 1799.

[17] *Ibid.*, Jan. 7, 9, 11, 1799.

[18] "Information was circulated in Philadelphia concerning Col Lyon, the church, my mother in law, & myself," Ogden later admitted. "All these things I strove to place right. The infringements upon religious liberty in New England came into view." Ogden to Washington, Feb. 12, 1799, Washington Papers.

[19] The *Aurora* had in this period some 1,700 subscribers according to a statement by Duane in November, 1834. Worthington C. Ford, "Letters of William Duane," *Proceedings of the Massachusetts Historical Society*, Second Series, XX (May, 1906), 392.

[20] Donald H. Stewart, *The Opposition Press of the Federalist Period* (Albany, 1969), 612. Stewart found that contemporary press quotations from the *Aurora* "far outnumbered those from any other in the Republican Press." On July 30, 1799, Duane was arrested under the Sedition Act. Federalist ardor to have him tried cooled when it was learned that Duane possessed documentation which would seriously embarrass President Adams. The Senate declared Duane guilty of a breach of its privileges on Mar. 25, 1800. Duane successfully evaded the Senate's process server, while continuing to direct the publication of the *Aurora*. John C. Miller, *Crisis in Freedom* (Boston, 1951), 197–199; James Morton Smith, *Freedom's Fetters: The Alien and Sedition Laws and American Civil Liberties* (Ithaca, 1956), 278–301; Dumas Malone, *Jefferson and the Ordeal of Liberty* (Boston, 1962), 463–467.

[21] Smith, *Freedom's Fetters*, 204, 288, 294; Malone, *Jefferson*, 464; Stewart, *The Opposition Press*, 611.

campaign issues because of a self-imposed restriction on political correspondence, Jeffersonian organizers and editors were left to select issues which best met local conditions. One major set of issues of the campaign of 1800 in the middle states has been discussed only rarely and without an understanding of its full dimensions.[22] In the region in which the *Aurora* circulated, Thomas Jefferson was put forward not only as an alternative to John Adams but also as an alternative to the New England political and religious attitudes which John Adams was said to represent. For almost two years the *Aurora* developed a negative image of New England religion and politics. This image became an important part of the campaign against Adams.

The first phase in the building of this image of a New England dominated by an intolerant clerical-political aristocracy focused upon Matthew Lyon of Vermont and Mrs. Mary Wooster of Connecticut. When John Ogden arrived in Philadelphia in December, 1798, carrying the Vermont petitions, he also carried firsthand knowledge of Federalist injustice to Republican Congressman Matthew Lyon. Editor Duane, eager for the truth of Congressman Lyon's imprisonment, published Ogden's description of Lyon's travails in seven of twelve early January issues. These emotional accounts portrayed Lyon as a Republican martyr suffering for the cause of free speech, free press, and governmental economy. A partisan grand jury had indicted Lyon. "An attorney subservient to the president" prosecuted him. A jury carefully "selected by a marshal appointed by the president" convicted him. A vindictive

22 Historians of early national political parties and of Connecticut politics have found the *Aurora*'s 1799–1800 issues a useful source for lively quotes about Federalist Connecticut. The source of the information for the *Aurora* items has not been known, however. See, Charles A. Beard, *Economic Origins of Jeffersonian Democracy* (New York, 1949), 364–365; Noble E. Cunningham, *Jeffersonian Republicans* (Chapel Hill, 1957), 208; Stewart, *The Opposition Press*, 415–417; Daniel Sisson, *The American Revolution of 1800* (New York, 1974), 303.

John Bach McMaster, *A History of the People of the United States* (New York, 1885–1938), II, 443–445; Vernon Stauffer, *New England and the Bavarian Illuminati* (New York, 1918), 314–317, 348–355; G. Adolf Koch, *Republican Religion* (New York, 1933), 251–261; Howard Mumford Jones, *America and French Culture* (Chapel Hill, 1927), 397–400; Bernard Fay, *The Revolutionary Spirit in France and America* (New York, 1966 reprint), 419–423, and *Notes on the American Press at the End of the Eighteenth Century* (New York, 1927), 26; Stewart, *The Opposition Press*, 413—all have briefly discussed the efforts of Republicans to attach the label "Illuminati" to the New England clergy.

Federalist judge sentenced him into the hands of an "inhuman Federal marshal."[23]

Immediately after sentencing, Lyon had been whisked off to a small, foul, dirty, draughty cell at a great distance from his home without opportunity to collect his possessions. The marshal let the cell remain unheated. Lyon suffered from exposure, "his feet and legs . . . benumbed" until friends provided a stove. The absence of any feelings of "humanity" among Vermont Federalists had, the *Aurora* proclaimed, almost allowed Lyon's cell to become "the grave of the man, whose only crime was the expression of free opinions. . . ."[24]

The jailer, by treating the prisoner as befitted a gentleman, drew upon himself "the rancor of the marshal." As a consequence of the marshal's threats, the jailer was impelled to screen carefully the few individuals allowed to visit the prisoner.[25] Moreover, records were made of individuals corresponding with Lyon, and his mail was censored. The names of his correspondents were publicly circulated by the Vergennes postmaster, while personal letters between Lyon and his son were regularly inspected and even maliciously destroyed as a harassment of the prisoner.[26] Yet through it all, Lyon bore the political persecution with resolution and courage.

Simultaneously, Ogden had been building a case for another martyr. The story of Mrs. Mary Clap Wooster came out in incoherent bits and pieces. Retired British Army Captain David Wooster had supervised the naval or collector's office for New Haven until 1775 when he volunteered his services to his state and was commissioned major general of militia and later of the Continental Line. The intent of the *Aurora*'s January 7 article was to show that while the General was serving in the invasion of Canada, Governor Trumbull of Connecticut, "contrary to Mrs. Wooster's application, in the general's absence, for a continuance of the office in the family, gave it to a gentleman, whose politics were equivocal." The office, wrenched from the Wooster family, had since been controlled by relatives of Connecticut congressmen. Mrs. Wooster thereafter

23 *Aurora*, Jan. 4, 1799.
24 *Ibid.*
25 *Ibid.*, Jan. 5, 1799.
26 *Ibid.*, Jan. 8, 1799.

"experienced numberless *needless causes of sorrow from public characters*, by the loss of the annual income held by the general, and the *waste of his estate in Vermont. . . .*"[27] The full story of Mrs. Wooster's sorrows did not appear until May, but within the week the "public characters" responsible were identified as Governors Trumbull and Wolcott, and their sons.[28] Relatives and connections of highly placed Federalists "enjoy thousands under the nation," but a deaf ear is turned to the pleas of the widow.[29]

An item shortly thereafter suggested that granting the New Haven collectorship to Mrs. Wooster's grandson would be an appropriate gesture of recompense.[30] Declaring that "the sufferings of that venerable Lady" had given rise to "a generous sympathy . . . in her behalf," the *Aurora* returned to the story two weeks later. Readers learned that the state of Connecticut had "wronged her out of *one thousand pounds lawful money*," while the President of the Connecticut Society of the Cincinnati completed her financial ruin by artfully wresting from her the last of her property.[31]

Few, if any, of the *Aurora*'s readers knew until the February 16 issue that John C. Ogden, the bearer of the Vermont petition, had also "married into the family of General Wooster, and has suffered with the General's widow in the general wreck of her affairs. . . ."[32] The *Aurora* went no further with the connection. It never indicated that the articles on Mrs. Wooster were written by the man who had been denied the New Haven collectorship in 1775.

After leaving Philadelphia, Ogden found time to tell Mrs. Wooster's story more carefully. A long essay, "The Progress of liberty and justice, exhibited in the history of an American officer's widow," first published in the New London *Bee* was reprinted by Duane in his May 20 and 27 issues.

General and Mrs. Wooster's estate in 1775 exceeded £10,000. In addition, his offices provided an annual income equal to $1,000. General Wooster offered meritorious leadership in the invasion of

[27] *Ibid.*, Jan. 7, 1799.
[28] *Ibid.*, Jan. 11, 1799.
[29] *Ibid.*, Jan. 9, 1799.
[30] *Ibid.*, Jan. 15, 1799.
[31] The Wooster home had been pillaged in a British raid, but Connecticut had recompensed Mrs. Wooster only one-sixteenth its value. *Aurora*, Feb. 4, 1799.
[32] *Ibid.*, Feb. 16, 1799.

Canada only to die defending Danbury, Connecticut. His death brought a sharp reversal in his widow's circumstances, but she made no murmur or complaint. As a consequence:

> For twenty-one years has she now mourned his death, submitting to complicated woes from an ungrateful country, and men who were almost infants when her husband was a general—from men who held continental commissions, but possessed none of those noble sentiments which distinguish the officer and patriot—from men who have wallowed in wealth and basked under the sunshine of place and power.[33]

Mrs. Wooster's financial decline had begun when the New Haven collector's office, with an income of £200 per annum, was given to a man "opposed to the revolution," a man "growing rich at leisure . . . as a contractor for the army and commissioner of confiscations," instead of to her son-in-law, who was "well acquainted with its affairs." Thereafter, private individuals highly placed in Connecticut government had twice swindled the widow out of what little remained of her inheritance. After General Wooster's departure for active military duty, "some gentlemen, who had gained promotion, and wished for wealth," sanctioned a system of fraud in the customs service which cost Mrs. Wooster another $1,500. Her "last and sure support" was a 200-acre farm. "Scarcely had she become mistress of it, before a military man [Benjamin Tallmadge] of great wealth, obtained by traffic, if not by plunder, during the war, led her to engage as a security." He then betrayed her, "obtained a mortgage on her farm, prosecuted her in the courts, recovered judgement, and took out execution." The property was sold and her financial ruin completed.[34]

A good deal about Ogden's thinking as well as his style of writing is evidenced in his essays on Matthew Lyon and Mrs. Wooster. His assertions have basis in fact, often in incidents he had personally experienced, but his feeling of righteousness and sense of injustice was so strong that he resorted to extreme language to describe almost every situation. The language immediately polarizes a situation. The oppressed are innocent victims, even martyrs. The op-

[33] *Ibid.*, May 20, 1799.
[34] *Ibid.*, May 27, 1799.

pressors never act alone, but always in concert. Ogden believed in conspiracies: conspiracies against himself, against Lyon, against Mrs. Wooster, against religion and against the people of the United States.

During his first month in Philadelphia, Ogden's writings for the *Aurora* were directed at exposing the injustices done by New England Federalists to Matthew Lyon and to Mrs. Mary Wooster. Simultaneously, he began to elaborate a number of themes which, while given less immediate stress, would be increasingly emphasized with the approach of the election of 1800. In bits and pieces, Ogden began to expose a conspiracy which he labeled the "New England System." Throughout his dozens of contributions runs the thesis that the Congregational clergy, led by President Timothy Dwight of Yale, directed New England politics and higher education. An intolerant clerical tyranny had resulted. A corollary thesis was that Connecticut, most effectively under Dwight's domination, led New England in the cause of intolerance. "The *system* that has been insensibly gaining upon our government, and producing a total dereliction of the principles which produced the revolution and established our independence," proclaimed the *Aurora*, "may be called emphatically the *New England* system, as the cause of the late war was the *old England system.*" The most distinguished and highly placed men in New England were educated in this system. "It regulates their genius, controuls their actions, and subjects their consciences to the tyranny of ambitious priests and imperious statesmen."[35]

In Connecticut, Timothy Dwight promoted the "ecclesiastical schemes of Calvin and Knox" by employing the clergy associations to communicate to the clergy and through them to their congregations.[36] The clergy preached on political subjects and attacked any and all opponents "with the most virulent abuse from the pulpit, the press, and in conversation. . . ." The people of Connecticut, having been taught to reverence and respect their ministers, "generally conclude that what *they* say must be true, and give implicitly into all their censoriousness and abuse." Honest men were silenced by "fear of persecution" while "others less honest, by caresses,

35 *Ibid.*, Jan. 9, 1799.
36 *Ibid.*, Jan. 19, 1799.

promises of places, &c have put on the mask of hypocrisy to serve their own interest and that of their friends."[37]

Dr. Dwight's influence was such that his "single nod moves the ecclesiastical and consequently [the] political body."[38] The combination of "*aristocracy* and *priestcraft*" kept the people of Connecticut "in implicit subjection to that party," and had effectively deprived them "even of a correct knowledge of *their own affairs*."[39] The clergy "influence the elections and controul the Governor, Council, lower house of Assembly, and Members of Congress." The political leadership not only granted money and property to the clergy, but also promoted their sons into places of honor and profit, franked letters and newspapers to them, and defended their tyranny. The people were being "impoverished and taxed by the ecclesiastical system, by wars and speculators . . ." into acquiescing to the rule of "President, Clergy, and Great Men, who form the aristocracy."[40] Comparing the aristocracy's monopoly of state and federal offices to royal patronage in the colonial period, Ogden suggested that Federalist war measures were designed so that "sons-in-law, brothers, cousins and nephews" of the clergy and great men "may now come and receive *royal* favors at Philadelphia, for their *common services*."[41]

According to Ogden, clerical tyranny existed in Vermont and New Hampshire but in slightly different form. Here again, however, it was a college president who directed the clergy. The Congregational clergy had exhorted tenants on Anglican glebe lands not to pay the moderate rents due the Episcopal clergy. The design, "to starve out the Episcopal clergy," was accomplished. "They saw their families often destitute of the necessities of life. . . . They . . . saw themselves reduced almost to beggary. . . ."[42] Not satisfied, the Congregational clergy turned to the Vermont legislature which completed the misery of the Episcopalians by seizing their lands "without pity or remorse."[43]

President John Wheelock of Dartmouth College led this move-

37 *Ibid.*, Feb. 5, 1799.
38 *Ibid.*
39 *Ibid.*, Jan. 11, 1799.
40 *Ibid.*, Jan. 19, 1799.
41 *Ibid.*, Jan. 11, 1799.
42 This account is based on Ogden's personal experiences.
43 *Aurora*, Jan. 15, 1799.

ment. He encouraged trespassing upon the lands, taught his students that seizure was lawful, and singled out those responsible with honorary degrees. When men who seek to gain votes and diplomas for themselves and high fees for college presidents are rewarded, cautioned Ogden, the effect is to "degrade and destroy" both "religion and learning."[44]

In Massachusetts, the Congregational clergy utilized the public's fears of Catholicism to increase their power and "to influence the people of New-England to war" with France. "By *fasts*, *prayers* and sermons," they taught "that the church of Rome is *antichrist*, the pope the *beast* of the revelations, and the system of catholics, Babylon which is to be destroyed." Harvard College, a part of this system, sponsored a paid "annual lecture in abuse of the church of Rome."[45]

Readers of the *Aurora* were reminded that the behavior of the Connecticut clergy in matters of religious freedom and politics closely paralleled the worst injustices of the Roman Catholic clergy during and after the Reformation. Timothy Dwight became, for Ogden, "the Pope of Connecticut," and his new home, the "*papal palace at Yale.*" The "inquisitorial rod of the Clergy" had so undermined liberty and knowledge in Connecticut that religious freedom there "is very much like that of Spain, Portugal, or Papal Rome. . . ." This "Hydra of clerical despotism" sought to extend its arm of influence. Pope Dwight "having subscribed to a test-act, perverts a public literary institution [Yale] to the purposes of party; and wishes to extend the effect and oppression of ecclesiastical establishment through this nation."[46]

In order that young people might be properly indoctrinated, the clergy had paid special attention to the colleges. They had subverted even public institutions. One set of religious opinions, Hutchinsonian theology, was being forced upon students at Yale, at Williams, and at Dartmouth. The colleges from New York to the south, as yet uncorrupted by "controverted theology," continued to embrace "universal science, candor and moderation." But in New England states, where the clergy had gained superiority, "a want

44 *Ibid.*, Jan. 11, 1799.
45 *Ibid.*
46 *Ibid.*, Feb. 5 and Jan. 19, 1799.

of conformity to the constitution of the christian church, and of these states, constantly creates disorder in church and state, introduces indifference, irreligion, and infidelity, forms and strengthens an aristocracy, and convultes government." "From this system," the *Aurora* warned, "confusion, expence, and trouble multiply."[47]

A number of readers, noting the unusually large amount of space the *Aurora* was devoting to the local affairs of New England, commented to the editor upon it. When still others criticized Duane for giving undue emphasis to the story, the editor replied:

> are the affairs of those states of no moment to the Union? If a conspiracy under the mark of religion, were formed in Virginia or Kentucky, to introduce an aristocratical tyranny, to blind and mislead the people, would it be deemed a matter of no interest to the nation to expose it? Away with such cavils and cavellers!
>
> We know that there are many fatal consequences produced to the Union, by an affected or real contempt of the conduct of *a party*, but if an anomalous admixture of *aristocratical* and *fanatical* interests is capable of completely *binding up the public mind* within the circuit of its influence, as in *Connecticut*, it is of importance to tear off the barbarous veil, worthy of the 11th century, and expose the ignominious system.[48]

Anxious that his message reach into New England and convinced that Federalist postmasters were removing the *Aurora* from the mails, Ogden resorted to a devious stratagem. The Hartford *Courant* informed its Connecticut readers that John C. Ogden "is now employed in writing paragraphs for the Aurora at Philadelphia, and in shewing *his wit* by enclosing that paper under cover, and with a counterfeited superscription, to many persons in Connecticut, in order to make them pay postage."[49] Ogden confessed with some pride to Thomas Jefferson that he had been sending the *Aurora* postage due into Connecticut. "As the press is shackled," he explained, "there can be no immorality, in putting the party who are thus unjust and arbitrary, to the expence of receiving information, by letters for which they must pay postage." Ogden suggested that "a repetition of such addresses will lead to the opening of the presses

[47] *Ibid.*, Jan. 9, 1799.
[48] *Ibid.*, Feb. 2, 1799.
[49] *Connecticut Courant*, Feb. 11, 1799.

sooner than argumentation upon the liberty & privilege of a free press."[50]

When Ogden left Philadelphia in January, 1799, the amount of space the *Aurora* devoted to New England significantly declined. He took the stage to Litchfield, planning to spend a few days supervising the printing of an account of his travels in Canada. On arrival, however, he was jailed for debt on petition of Secretary of the Treasury Oliver Wolcott, a Litchfield resident. A decade earlier Ogden had borrowed, and never repaid, $180.[51] Oliver's brother, Frederick, deposited with the sheriff a sum of money for Ogden's maintenance. He indicated a desire to confine Ogden for an extended period.[52]

The Federalist press generally crowed that Ogden, the "High Priest of Sedition" and friend of Matthew Lyon, deserved incarceration for refusing to pay his debts. The Republican press charged that Ogden's imprisonment was politically motivated. Ogden was being harassed, said the *Aurora*, for his outspoken political opinions and for carrying Matthew Lyon's petitions to President Adams.[53]

Ogden vowed to friends that he would remain active during his confinement. "It is too important for the general weal," he explained, "that I should continue the work against intolerance and superstition for me to be quiet or easy, while I have hourly opportunities to scatter light into the paths of the people of this Town, County, & State."[54] With "pen, ink, paper, books, newspapers, letters, a good fire" and a determination that no moment be lost in circulating "light and truth," he returned to his favorite themes. Essays on "The injury done to Madam Wooster," "The injuries done to the clergy in Vermont," and his mission on behalf of Matthew Lyon flowed from his pen. When newspapers in the vicinity proved unwilling to print these pieces, he forwarded them to Charles Holt, Republican editor of the New London *Bee*.[55]

50 Ogden to Jefferson, Feb. 7, 1799, Thomas Jefferson Papers, Library of Congress.

51 *Connecticut Courant*, May 27, 1799.

52 Ogden to Ephraim Kirby, Mar. 7, 1799, Ephraim Kirby Manuscript Collection.

53 *Connecticut Courant*, May 27, 1799 and Feb. 11, 1799; *Litchfield Monitor*, June 12, 1799; *Aurora*, Feb. 19, Apr. 9 and 29, 1799.

54 Ogden to Ephraim Kirby, Mar. 7, 1799, Ephraim Kirby Manuscript Collection.

55 Ogden to John Adams, Feb. 20, 1799, Thomas Jefferson Papers; Ogden to Ephraim Kirby, Mar. 19, 1799, Ephraim Kirby Manuscript Collection. The *Aurora* recopied the essay on Mrs. Wooster from the *Bee*, although it contained little that had not been imparted in Ogden's earlier accounts. *Aurora*, May 20, 27, 1799.

Holt's publication of a Wooster essay called forth a vigorous protest from Noah Webster. Webster described Ogden as having "the disposition of a savage." Ogden had violated "the rules of good breeding to gratify party spirit" by introducing the problems of "that venerable lady" into the public prints. Mrs. Wooster was "entirely satisfied with the treatment she has received from government." Webster maintained she had not authorized the writings concerning her.[56]

The few items about New England which appeared in the *Aurora* after January, 1799, clearly appeared to have been sent from Connecticut. The discussion focused on the impact of the *Aurora* in Connecticut. Shortly after Ogden wrote to Thomas Jefferson that "many publications in the Aurora have reached Connecticut, within four weeks, which have opened the eyes of the dispassionate," the *Aurora* proclaimed: "the Aurora has become the rage in Connecticut and to the Eastward," and Connecticut members of Congress "are horribly alarmed by the encreasing number of the Aurora that passes into the state."[57] A conspiracy which had prevented the circulation of the *Aurora* east of the Connecticut River for almost four years "thro' the abuses of the Post-Office" had only recently been frustrated. The people, having "*missed* the discussion of both sides of all questions . . . are now making up for past losses."[58]

Later in the spring, the *Aurora* revived this theme by printing a letter from Connecticut which offered explanations as to why Republican papers had difficulty circulating. "The Aurora is looked upon by many here," the writer explained, "as an important check on federal ambition and extravagance, that has been the salvation of millions to the country; and many would patronize it, would not such a measure point them out as objects of *persecution*." Federalist control of the post offices remained a problem.

> The Post-Office in this State like every public institution is subjected to all the abuses of party—neither private letters nor newspapers escape, the former are broken open and sometimes withheld—the clerks superscribe insolent taunts on the covers—or withhold them altogether, and par-

[56] Noah Webster to Charles Holt, June 3, 1799, in Harry Warfel, ed., *Letters of Noah Webster* (New York, 1953), 198–201.

[57] Ogden to Jefferson, Feb. 7, 1799, Thomas Jefferson Papers; *Aurora*, Feb. 23, 1799.

[58] *Aurora*, Feb. 23, 1799.

ticularly newspaper—yet no one dares to complain—lest, like Paul, he should be ruined by prosecution.[59]

The *Aurora*'s Connecticut correspondent wrote soon after, relating more recent developments. Holt's New London *Bee*, "the one print in this State which dares even to take a glimpse at the dark side of the worst practices or the wickedest measures," had been the victim of a concerted effort to obstruct its circulation. Initially, the *Bee* was pilfered by post office employees. When that was exposed, Federalists adopted a new tactic. By interfering with the stage drivers, they insured that "every paper sent by that medium was destroyed" and "for a time that paper could not circulate by the stages."[60]

Ogden spent a major part of his time in jail writing—writing to friends and public figures, writing for newspapers, and writing pamphlets. On May 27, Duane printed a series of items most certainly submitted by Ogden.[61] One item told of his efforts to have a pamphlet published. The printer had commenced printing when Litchfield Federalists, Senator Uriah Tracy and Representative John Allen, learned of it. They threatened dire consequences to the printer if the work were published. "The poor printer's nerves could not bear a competition" with them, and he returned the manuscript unprinted. "And such," wrote Ogden drawing the moral, "is the freedom of the press and the respect for the laws in Connecticut."[62]

Another of the items derived from Ogden's experience. A group of young soldiers recruiting in Litchfield had recently threatened to tar and feather him.[63] Privately, Ogden immediately protested to former President George Washington. To arouse the public to the dangers of a "mercenary military force," he sent an account to the *Aurora*. He emphasized the dangers of recruiting boys, who should be learning

59 *Ibid.*, June 13, 1799. Clerks in the Litchfield post office had superscribed taunts on the covers of newspapers sent to Ogden while he was in jail. Ogden to Ephraim Kirby, Apr. 8, 1799, Ephraim Kirby Manuscript Collection.

60 *Aurora*, July 26, 1799.

61 One was a long account of Mrs. Wooster's affairs, and another was an announcement that Ogden's *Tour through Canada* would soon be on sale and was "worthy of the attention of readers and retailers of literature."

62 *Aurora*, May 27, 1799.

63 Ogden to Washington, May 23, 1799, copy sent to Ephraim Kirby, Ephraim Kirby Manuscript Collection.

useful trades, and of taking men from their work and families "to be maintained in idleness at the expence of the public—and what is worse at the expence of morale and sobriety. . . ." If people would enquire into the consequence of this mercenary army "springing up without necessity, and promising *no good*," Ogden insisted they could not remain "indifferent" to it.[64]

On June 10, 1799, after Ogden signed a note of indebtedness, Frederick Wolcott ordered his release from jail. "As his note is payable on demand," Frederick informed his brother, "unless he immediately quit this part of the country I will again attach & confine him."[65] Ogden quickly departed for New Haven to visit his family. After a short visit the advantages of Philadelphia beckoned again. He hoped his contacts there might help to locate a pulpit in Maryland, Delaware, or Virginia. Carrying manuscripts written in jail, he set out for the nation's capital, its Republican printers, the *Aurora*, and the opportunity of broadcasting his views on the emerging New England tyranny.

Over the summer the *Aurora* had remained relatively quiet about New England. In October, however, more revelations of New England's clerical tyranny appeared. A correspondent, probably Ogden, introduced the tale of a new martyr to the tyranny of "the monarchy and federal party in Connecticut." New London *Bee* editor, Charles Holt, had been indicted under the sedition law for publishing criticisms of the recruiting service. The *Bee*'s concern, the correspondent asserted, stemmed from a "sympathy for the unexperienced youths who were adventuring into war contrary to the inclination of parents and friends. . . ." Holt's real crime was not that of criticizing recruiting. It was that of having scrutinized, detected, and exposed the "tyrannies which others have not dared to publish." Holt, "modest, sensible and unassuming," a man of honor and prudence, had avoided "the current of virulence, slander, and venom." But "where an aristocracy and clergy, are confederated by interest and combined from a necessity . . . if he proceeds they must fall, they see no other alternative."[66]

64 *Aurora*, May 27, 1799.

65 Frederick Wolcott to Oliver Wolcott, June 10, 1799, Oliver Wolcott, Jr., Collection, Connecticut Historical Society.

66 *Aurora*, Oct. 4, 1799. Ogden had written to George Washington, the *Aurora*, and probably the *Bee* on recruiting practices in Litchfield.

The *Bee* almost alone had defied the Federalist Party in Connecticut—the party which "wishes to forge chains in Connecticut, to bind this whole nation," and openly avows as its objects: "a limited monarchy—a separation of the State into two governments, a religious establishment, an army to subjugate Virginians, and Kentuckyians, and destroy republicans." "Bold, open and damning plans are in action . . .," asserted the author, "to infringe upon our religious liberties, to trespass, upon the rights of conscience, and destroy toleration." Holt's success in arousing the people of Connecticut from lethargy led to his following Matthew Lyon to the bar of Federalist injustice. This prosecution might, however, the writer predicted, "open the eyes of the people of the Eastern States" and call forth "efforts to maintain the *liberty of the press.*"[67]

A long piece which appeared late in October differed in style and tone from work known to be authored by Ogden. Its theme, the relationship between New England Federalism and national politics, was broader and the presentation more reasonably presented. Yet, the article began where the letter three weeks earlier had concluded. Federalists, "The Eastern Oligarchy," had "brought the United States to the verge of dishonour and destruction. . . ." "A few aspiring persons and families," the writer asserted, had persuaded New Englanders that their ascendancy "would enrich those states," and their inhabitants. Within Congress, the New England faction was "uniform in all their movements and votes." "Possessed of all the information of the executive counsels," New England Federalists had been the servile defenders of "British insolence and indignity." They invited foreign influence and intrigue. They posed the great threat to American liberties. They sponsored the Alien and Naturalization laws "to stem the torrent of population, industry, and wealth, which the convolutions of Europe had thrown on our shores." The Sedition law, in turn, was calculated to stifle enquiry into their machinations. "Under the shield of the *Executive name*, and the *Sedition Bill*, they expect to cover all their stratagems, and to obstruct enquiry into their treachery."[68]

In November, 1799, Ogden introduced a new twist to the *Aurora*'s

[67] *Aurora*, Oct. 4, 1799.
[68] *Ibid.*, Oct. 26, 1799.

assault on New England. Henceforth, he was to identify the Congregational clergy of that region as "the Illuminati," a term which had special meaning in this era. Two years earlier, John Robison, professor of Natural Philosophy at Edinburgh University, published *Proofs of a Conspiracy against All the Religions and Governments of Europe, carried on in the Secret Meetings of the Free Masons, Illuminati, and Reading Societies.* Robison sought to explain the revolutionary turmoil of Europe in terms of a conspiracy. "An association has been formed," he asserted, "for the express purpose of rooting out all the religious establishments, and overturning all the existing governments of Europe." The association, the Order of Illuminati, had gained control of the societies of freemasonry. The Illuminati produced the most active leaders of the French Revolution. Its agents, he warned, were still at work secretly expanding their influence.[69]

In London, a French Jesuit exile, the Abbé Augustin Barruel, was completing a four-volume work, *Mémoires pour servir à l'histoire du Jacobinisme,* devoted to an almost identical thesis. According to Barruel, a clique of anti-Christ conspirators, the Illuminati, with their evil genius, rigid discipline and secrecy, had plotted and coordinated the overthrow of governments and the Church. Their first step, the publication of *L'Encyclopedie,* had been followed by a systematic undermining of religion. The agents of conspiracy infiltrated the lodges of freemasonry. The lodges became a cover for their work of impiety and political disruption. The day of revolution had been decided upon. On July 14, 1789, the Illuminati threw off the cloak of secrecy. They stood forth as the Jacobins, fosterers and spreaders of revolution.[70]

As far fetched as this simplistic conspiratorial interpretation of the French Revolution appears today, it had a powerful attraction

69 Stauffer, *New England and the Bavarian Illuminati,* 199–203. Bavarian liberal Adam Weishaupt organized the Order of the Illuminati in 1776. The secret order's purpose of assisting the development of the human race appealed to liberal thinking Germans, and by 1784 its membership exceeded 2,000. The society declined rapidly under pressure from the Bavarian government and never flourished outside of Bavaria. By 1787 it ceased to function altogether. Jones, *America and French Culture,* 397.

70 Stauffer, *New England and the Bavarian Illuminati,* 215–225. American editions of Robison's work were printed at Hartford, Conn., and Elizabethtown, N. J., in 1799.

for a number of New England Federalists in a period when war with France appeared imminent. Among them were Jedadiah Morse of Massachusetts, Noah Webster, and Timothy and Theodore Dwight of Connecticut. The Reverend Morse found in Robison's volume ready explanation for the spread of infidelity, impiety and immorality in the United States. The agents of the Order of Illuminati must be at work in America. For Morse, the American friends and supporters of revolutionary France, Jefferson and his democratic allies, stood clearly exposed by Robison's thesis as the purveyors of Illuminati disruption. They were responsible for "the astonishing increase of irreligion," and the constant flow of "vile slanders" against public officials. The goal of the Jeffersonians, Morse suggested, none too subtlely, was to import France's Jacobin revolution into the United States.[71]

Dr. Timothy Dwight, a life-long foe to the forces of irreligion, added his warning against the "impious teachers" and "false doctrines" which were weakening Christianity in Europe and America. Dwight's 1798 Fourth of July message, "The Duty of Americans in the Present Crisis," was a rallying call to battle the Illuminati's American sympathizers. At the same New Haven observance, Noah Webster added the weight of his intellect to the formidable idea of an American Jacobin conspiracy. According to the *Connecticut Journal*, "Doct Dwight and Mr. Webster exposed . . . those principles of modern philosophy which desolate Europe, and threaten the universe with mighty evils."[72]

That same day, Theodore Dwight, Timothy's brother, explained to a Hartford audience that the French Revolution "was planned by a set of men whose avowed object was the overthrow of Altars and Thrones, that is, the destruction of all Religion and Government." This set of men, the "modern Illuminati," had their American agents. "I know not who belonged to that Society in this country," he confessed, "but if I were about to make proselytes to illuminatism in the United States, I should in the first place apply to Thomas

[71] *Ibid.*, 232. Morse developed his views in, *A Sermon, delivered . . . May 9, 1798, being the day recommended by John Adams . . . for solemn Humiliation, Fasting and Prayer* (Boston, 1798).

[72] *Connecticut Journal*, July 11, 1798, in Stauffer, *New England and the Bavarian Illuminati*, 252.

Jefferson, Albert Gallatin, and their political associates."[73] One Hartford listener declared that he had never seen Mr. Jefferson as "anything more than the foe of certain men, who were in possession of places to which he might think himself entitled," until, by Dwight's aid, his eyes had been opened to the truth that Jefferson "is the *real Jacobin*, the very child of *modern illumination*, the foe of man, and the enemy of his country."[74]

With Morse and Dwight in the lead, the Congregational clergy joined the crusade to expose the Illuminati. By their efforts many New Englanders would become convinced that Robison and Barruel had indeed stumbled upon a sinister world-wide conspiracy.[75] Almost two years later the *Aurora* reported that "letters from a member of a very respectable congregation in Connecticut to his friend in this city, says the clergy are preaching up *Robison* and *Barruel* instead of the Gospel."[76]

John C. Ogden understood the power of the terms "Illuminati" and "Jacobin." More than simple invective, the words conveyed a definite image—the image of an insidious, antichristian, antigovernment, foreign conspiracy threatening the United States. The conspirators and their American sympathizers were the very embodiment of evil. Ogden was comfortable with a conspiratorial view of events. His own views were premised upon the existence of a conspiracy working to control the nation's religion and politics.

Ogden returned to Philadelphia late in 1799, carrying a newly printed pamphlet and a newly conceived plan to revitalize the *Aurora*'s assault on New England. The pamphlet was *A View of the New England Illuminati*. The plan was to transfer the label "Illuminati," with all of its negative conspiratorial connotations, to the New England Congregational clergy and their Federalist political allies. The term Illuminati had been occasionally used by Ogden in

73 Stauffer, *New England and the Bavarian Illuminati*, 253; Theodore Dwight, *An Oration spoken at Hartford, . . . July 4th, 1798* (Hartford, 1798), 30. The Rev. David Tappan at Harvard and the Rev. John C. Smith at Sharon, Conn., warned against the European combination of infidels and atheists. Koch, *Republican Religion*, 258.

74 *Connecticut Courant*, Aug. 6, 1798, in Stauffer, *New England and the Bavarian Illuminati*, 283.

75 Bernard Fay has said of Morse and Dwight's charge: "Like a flame in a forest, the idea ran over all New England and then gained the other states where, however, it was more disputed." *The Revolutionary Spirit in France and America*, 419.

76 *Aurora*, Apr. 9, 1800.

the *Aurora* before, but beginning in November, 1799, it became an important recurring theme.

The *Aurora* began by asking why the New England Calvinists were giving such wide circulation to Robison and Barruel's works? Dr. Morse's activities in introducing the question were explainable by his education at "that seat of bigotry and intolerance," Yale, and by his desire to emulate in Massachusetts Dr. Dwight's power over Connecticut. But what of the preoccupation of the clergy as a whole? That, said the *Aurora*, could only be understood in the context of their schemes "to exalt federalism and obtain a religious establishment which will deliver the consciences, money, and purses of this nation into the hands of their party." The *Aurora* professed not to understand why Dr. Morse did not confess the errors of his ways on being informed by a learned European correspondent "that no such society exists as is described by Robison." But it supplied its own answer. Doctors Morse and Dwight desired to undermine public respect for freemasonry. The freemasons as friends of religious liberty presented a major obstacle to these advocates of religious establishment.[77]

John Ogden did not remain long in Philadelphia. His fruitless quest for a pulpit carried him into Virginia, Delaware, and Maryland. His travels may explain periods such as that from late November, 1799, through January, 1800, when little is said in the *Aurora* of New England, Dr. Dwight, or the Illuminati. They may also account for a number of articles exhibiting Ogden's style appearing in Republicans newspapers in those states before being printed in the *Aurora*.

By February, Ogden appears to have returned to Philadelphia. The *Aurora* again announced that ecclesiastics "who wish for political sway" and "laymen in office, who wish for clerical influence to retain them in place," compose "the Illuminati of New England." The Connecticut congressional delegation, it was asserted, looked to the president of Yale, the head of the Illuminati, for direction. United by blood, marriage and interest, the Illuminati of Connecticut pursued "place, favor and power" for the Dwight, Hillhouse, Davenport, Goodrich, Wolcott, Tracy, Reeve and Griswold families. It was to hide these designs from their own constituents, said the

[77] *Ibid.*, Nov. 16, 1799.

Aurora, that New England Federalists brought forth the sedition law. Charles Holt of the New London *Bee* had been indicted and would be tried in April. "Fine and imprisonment will undoubtedly be his portion," predicted the *Aurora*. "Should the civil arm be laid lightly upon him for a political offence, he will not so easily be absolved for an offence against the illuminati." Having challenged them, he now faces "all the anathemas, prayers, and influence of the pulpit, throne, and sword" at the disposal of that body. Once the press had been cowed into silence by making an example of Holt, the Illuminati would be freed "to introduce a system of terror in that state."[78]

Shortly thereafter, the *Aurora* analyzed the motives, interests, and attachments comprising what it categorized as the two basic factions of the Federalist Party. One faction, the Hamiltonian Party, included the old Tories, the army and navy place- and profit-hunting party, the British agency and speculating party, and the monarchical and anti-Gallican party. The other faction, the President's friends, was made up of the New England party, the Connecticut Illuminati, and the office-hunting party. Any reader could easily have seen the point; John Adams was politically dependent upon New England and the Illuminati.[79]

When Philadelphia printer James Carey brought out an edition of *A View of the New England Illuminati*, the *Aurora* urged it on its readers, saying:

> This book, within a few months has attained a very rapid and extensive circulation, in all parts of the union. It is the "clue" to the tyrannies at the northward, which have assumed the controul of our affairs, under the sanction of *federalism*, or an union of church & state, & which has associated in one *focus*, *federalism*, *religion*, *war*, *aristocracy*, *monarchy*, and *prelacy*.[80]

Only a hint was given as to the author of the work: his earlier writing had led to "an imprisonment at the part of a public officer in the administration." The same issue advised readers that another pamphlet, *A Short History of the Late Ecclesiastical Oppressions in*

78 *Ibid.*, Jan. 17 and Feb. 12, 1800.
79 *Ibid.*, Feb. 17, 1800.
80 *Ibid.*, Feb. 14, 1800.

New-England and Vermont, was also available. It had already obtained "an extensive circulation in Virginia and Connecticut" and served as "an appendix to the view of the Illuminati in New-England."[81]

By early spring 1800, the major arguments of the *Aurora*'s New England attack had been presented. The remainder of the campaign would be spent reinforcing images of New England already developed, and demonstrating that the states surrounding Pennsylvania were threatened by Illuminism. Heroes and villains, whom readers had come to know well, regularly reappeared as John Ogden and William Duane enlarged and clarified their picture of New England. The cause of Mrs. Wooster was resurrected by a series of letters from her daughter.[82] The trial of Charles Holt focused attention once again upon his sufferings. "On good Friday, 1799, the Connecticut Illuminati were preaching up politics from the pulpit," declared the *Aurora*, "we may expect to hear by the advices from that quarter that they will be crying out on the approaching occasion against *Holt*, the printer—*Crucify him—Crucify him.*"[83] The *Aurora* saw symbolism in the trial having begun in the court house, but having concluded in the Congregational meetinghouse. New England "Religion and Order" had joined to condemn an American to imprisonment for little more than referring to the "provisional" army as a "standing" army.[84] Sensible Americans, the *Aurora* insisted, could see through these proceedings. Holt was a "martyr suffering for the righteous cause of liberty."[85]

The *Aurora*'s very negative descriptions of Connecticut ran counter to many readers' traditional image of a simple, agricultural, but politically informed, state. How then had the Illuminati gained sway? In a long carefully written article of March 31, 1800, editor Duane set forth the explanation. Connecticut was governed, in the absence of a constitution, by "certain ancient usages and customs." The most important of these was a hierarchy "directed by a *sovereign*

81 *Ibid.* Another of Ogden's anonymous productions, *A Short History of the Late Ecclesiastical Oppressions in New England and Vermont . . .*, had been published by James Lyon of Richmond, Va., a few months earlier.

82 *Aurora*, Feb. 20, Mar. 10, 26, 1800.

83 *Ibid.*, Apr. 10, 1800.

84 *Ibid.*, Apr. 25, 1800.

85 *Ibid.*, June 5, 1800.

pontiff, twelve *cardinals*, a *civil council* of nine, and about four hundred *parochial bishops*."

This hierarchy was organized as the governing board of Yale College. The annual September commencement at Yale approximated a royal ceremony. The civil and religious leaders of the state gathered at the direction of President Dwight.

On this occasion, the governor and other *civilians* are subordinate to the President; and they feel deeply impressed with a sense of their subordination, knowing that he can kill or make alive at the next annual election; that he emphatically holds the keys which command their political damnation or salvation.

The clergy return from New Haven "with a perfect understanding" of what candidates they are to have their congregations support at the next election.

The Sunday previous to the day on which the people meet to deliver in their suffrages, is devoted to political harangues from the political desk. On these occasions, in the heat of political zeal, the preacher will name the individuals who are to receive or be excluded from popular approbation, and with a *holy fervour* instruct the people of his church how they are to bestow their suffrages, threatening divine vengeance on all who disregard his *pious admonitions*.

An almost identical scene occurred each May at the installation of the governor and upper house. President Dwight and clergy attended, were entertained at state expense, made preparation for the fall elections, and carefully oversaw and approved "every appointment" made by the government.

Dwight directed the flow of propaganda from Connecticut pulpits and from its printing presses. "By various means the pope and his clergy, have obtained almost the exclusive direction of the press. The newspapers which circulate in every parish, village or neighborhood, are either patronized or discountenanced by the clergymen, according as they promote or oppose his designs." Clergy and printers united to denounce as "antichristian, antifederal, jacobinical, [and] disorganizing" persons "of a different religious denomination" from President Dwight, or any who "deny or doubt the Pope's supremacy, or infallibility." As a result, Connecticut's congressional delegation "are generally Clergymen's sons" who, because they owe allegiance to Dwight and because their state has no

constitution, "see with indifference the constitution of our national government violated, reviled, impaired and frittered away by degrees."[86]

The *Aurora* offered its subscribers striking evidence of Connecticut's perversity by printing a list of Connecticut blue laws. These laws demonstrated that the ignorance and prejudice which presently existed had governed that state since its founding. Emphasis was placed upon the laws having "never yet been eradicated."[87] Ogden knew the laws to have had no force during his lifetime. He and Duane knew that the source of this list, Samuel Peters' *A General History of Connecticut* (1781), was an anti-Connecticut piece written in forced exile by an Anglican Tory. No explanation accompanied another slightly shortened list published a few days later. Entitled "Some of the Laws of Connecticut," the list would have appeared abhorrent to Pennsylvanians.

> No Quaker, or dissenter from the established worship of this dominion, shall be allowed to give a vote for the election of magistrates or any *officer*.
>
> No food or lodging shall be offer'd to a Quaker, Adamite, or other *Heretic*!
>
> No one shall *run* on the Sabbath day or *walk* in his garden, or elsewhere, except *reverently* to and from meeting.
>
> No woman shall *kiss* her *child* on a Sabbath day.[88]

Thomas Jefferson's alleged heretical views on religion had become a major national campaign issue by the summer of 1800. As did other republican newspapers, the *Aurora* countered such allegations by defending Jefferson, but it also turned the issue to its advantage by insisting that unchristian behavior was characteristic of most prominent Connecticut Federalists. Oliver Wolcott's administration of the Treasury became an example when the *Aurora* claimed it had evidence "that certain sums of money were unaccounted for at the treasury. . . ."[89] Federalists Benjamin Tallmadge, John Cotton Smith and Tapping Reeve had evidenced their "regard for the *Sabbath*" by clandestinely printing and distributing at Litchfield election handbills on a Sunday. "Tallmadge's piety," the

86 *Ibid.*, Mar. 31, 1800.
87 *Ibid.*, July 29, 1800.
88 *Ibid.*, Aug. 5, 1800.
89 *Ibid.*, June 25, 1800.

Aurora added, "we have detailed in the history of his pillaging Mrs. Wooster." "Can we believe that the people of New England have a due respect for Christianity," asked the *Aurora*, "when they tolerate the abuse of such a man, while they send a man of so implacable a spirit to Congress as him who wished to exterminate every man, woman and child in a numerous nation [France]." The latter individual was another Litchfield resident, Senator Uriah Tracy.[90] John Allen, congressman from Litchfield, had, the *Aurora* reminded its readers, publicly supported a standing army as "necessary to help the majority *to govern the minority*." He had labored constantly "to convert the people of that State from *republicanism* to *royalty*."[91] These, admonished the *Aurora*, were the Christian statesmen from Connecticut who were criticizing Thomas Jefferson's religious principles.

As the *Aurora* proceeded with its unmasking of the New England Illuminati, it introduced a corollary theme: the politics of Delaware, New Jersey, and Maryland exhibited qualities dangerously similar to those of Connecticut. Governor Richard Basset of Delaware had "placed himself at the head of the religious society of the methodists." In an effort to imitate Dr. Dwight's success, Methodist preachers had commenced preaching "that no salvation is to be expected by those who support the election of *Thomas Jefferson*. . . ."[92] Federalists in Kent and Sussex counties had opposed American independence. The success of the Illuminati of New England "inspired the deluded bigots and tories in Delaware, with expectations of either a return to the *British* government or favors under a system of policy in this country too justly called British."[93] The *Aurora* admitted that from reports it was receiving, Delaware Federalists "appear to exceed the Illuminati of New-England, in their zeal for British gold and principles."[94]

90 *Ibid.*, June 27, 1800. With a great deal of glee, Duane printed a court order to the Litchfield sheriff ordering the attachment of Senator Tracy's property pending outcome of a $2,500 suit against him. *Ibid.*, Aug. 21, 1800. The *Aurora* also accused Tracy of visiting the Northwest Territory during the congressional break in order to avoid his creditors. *Ibid.*, Aug. 9, 1800.

91 *Ibid.*, Mar. 31, 1800.

92 *Ibid.*, Apr. 8, 1800.

93 *Ibid.*, Aug. 9, 1800.

94 *Ibid.*, July 12, 1800.

New Jersey, less corrupted than Delaware, was nonetheless threatened by a party led by Dr. Samuel Smith of Princeton. Dr. Smith, a correspondent of Doctors Dwight and Morse and friend of Secretary of the Treasury Oliver Wolcott, Jr., perverted Princeton "to party influence and doctrines uncongenial with our government." His lectures inculcated monarchical doctrines in his students. His party endeavored "to establish a national church and to renew all the intolerance and persecution" of the past. The level to which Dr. Smith had sunk was indicated by his having disciplined a student for "reading a small pamphlet published in this city [Philadelphia], concerning the New-England Illuminati."[95]

In Maryland, Ogden believed that a faction of Tories were liberty's antagonists. Their goal was monarchy; their tactic, the setting of one religious sect against another. They had induced Episcopalians and Roman Catholics to fear a Presbyterian religious establishment. Religious liberty in Maryland was threatened, said the *Aurora*, but not by Presbyterians who "have been averse to political fasts and addresses to President Adams. . . ." It was the Episcopalians who "still wish for the leeks, and onions, the loaves and fishes of the union between Church and State in England."[96]

Factions in Delaware, New Jersey, and Maryland might seek to imitate New England's Illuminati, but they could not rival its effectiveness. The *Aurora* returned again and again over the summer to the theme of the Illuminati. Readers for the first time learned of Ogden's beliefs about its origins. The religious opinions of Jonathan Edwards provided its ideological basis. The Illuminati "was begot in *New Jersey College*. It had been brought forth in *Elizabethtown* [N. J.], reared in Connecticut & confirmed in its maturity at *Yale*, and *Dartmouth*." Its progeny, including many Princeton-trained clergy, circulated the opinions of Edwards, Joseph Bellamy, Samuel Hopkins and others of the New Divinity.[97]

In a style similar to the listing of the King's violations of colonial rights in the Declaration of Independence, Ogden and the *Aurora* set forth in one list "the tyrannies, ambition and hypocrisy of the Illuminati:"

[95] *Ibid.*, Apr. 21, 1800.
[96] *Ibid.*, July 31, 1800.
[97] *Ibid.*, July 11, 12, and Aug. 23, 1800.

They have artfully seized upon the institutions and modes of education.

They have pillaged the Episcopal churches in the five eastern states, of their property. . . .

They have waged war against the religion, safety and quiet of every other denomination.

They have sent missionaries to disturb the peace of others in Vermont, and the new settlements in the state of New York, and are endeavouring to extend them into the frontiers and Indian country.

They have anathematized the *church of Rome*, and in *prayers*, *sermons*, *lectures*, and institutions, ranked her with *Babylon* and *Anti-Christ*, which are to be destroyed.

They have espoused the political system of terror, lately adopted in our public affairs. . . .

In our capitals, they and their clergy are generally *Britons* by *birth*, *education* and *attachments*.

In most places they are *old tories*, or their dependents—*British merchants* or *agents*, directing and controuling all our affairs to the utmost of their power.[98]

The list concluded in an anti-British vein new to Ogden's writings. It derived from his recent failure to locate a position in Maryland or Virginia where the pulpits remained filled by clergy originally supplied from England. Because of their pro-British sympathies, they had become, in Ogden's view, the allies of the New England Illuminati. Only a slight difference in goal separated the two groups. The Tories "wish to return to the domination of George the Third, while the Illuminati, wished to make John Adams king."

In September a lengthy five-part series, "Anglo-Federalism, British Influence and the New England Illuminati," explored this connection further. The *Aurora*, identifying Ogden as the author of *A View of the New England Illuminati*, praised him for persevering in the face of bitter opposition and for having dragged a conspiracy from its New England lair into the light of open day. Anxious to avoid the impression that Ogden was solely responsible, the *Aurora* observed: "It will be obvious, however, to the readers of this paper, that other channels have been used to obtain information. . . ." What was not obvious to the reader was that almost all of those channels involved Ogden, his friends, or relatives.

From praising Ogden, the articles shifted to an examination of

[98] Reprinted from the *Baltimore American* in the *Aurora*, Aug. 23, 1800.

statements made by President Adams when journeying through Connecticut. Noting that "among the New-England Illuminati, monarchy is a leading object," the writer asserted that Adams had "expressed himself plainly and explicitly, that—'The people of the United States never will be happy until their chief magistrate is hereditary.' " The *Aurora* had had some difficulty in directly linking Adams to the Illuminati; but here at last in the President's own words was a confession as to their common purpose. The President had also admitted "to a gentleman of the highest respectability" that "there is a strong British faction among us . . .," although he claimed having opposed its manipulations.[99]

The article thereupon undertook "to pursue the system of this combined *Illuminati* back to its lesser sources. . . ." Referring the reader to Ogden's "excellent pamphlet" for the college's role as the "nursery of aristocracy," the writer focused on the pattern which reoccurred each time a newly graduated clergyman established himself in a community. It was customary, he indicated, for a new minister to receive from $500 to $1,000 as a settlement payment. The payment was intended to compensate for the expenses of his education and to allow him a sufficient independence of his parishioners to check their vices. The money was generally used to purchase a farm which was then greatly improved in value by the labor and gifts of his congregation. To the revenues of the farm were added an annual salary, marriage fees, income from teaching school and, very often, marriage into an opulent family. The clergyman gained universal respect with no more effort than he had gained his wealth. Children were taught from childhood that a certain sanctity surrounded his acts and opinions. When the clergy "teach and preach politics instead of morals," they easily gained power for themselves and offices for their sons and connections.[100]

Should the community manifest any discontent toward the clergy, "a *fast day* is appointed." Sermons were then preached, "in which a clamour is raised about infidelity, deism, and some unseen foes leaguing with satan against *their religion*." Should an individual attempt to become independent of the clergy's influence or hint at any doubts about the minister's abilities or deportment, "the

[99] *Ibid.*, Sept. 6, 1800.
[100] *Ibid.*, Sept. 8, 1800.

preacher carries the matter into the pulpit, and there prays against his antagonist by name; persuades the deacons that he is injured, and lets loose the parishioners to vilify his adversary."[101] Through unity and a systematic quest for power, the clergy had gained for their political allies "an ascendancy in the National Government which prevents even the President from challenging them."[102]

The final installment in the series summarized the major arguments which Ogden had been presenting for several months: the New England Illuminati's attempt to pass "the spurious and corrupt" productions of Robison and Barruel "as genuine history"; the uniting of family connection with ecclesiastical influence in Connecticut; and the Episcopal clergy's desire for a reunion of church and state in Maryland, Delaware, Pennsylvania and New Jersey. These elements comprised a serious threat to the nation's religious and political liberty.[103]

Pennsylvania legislative elections were scheduled for October. It had been clear since March, however, that in Pennsylvania there would be no popular vote on the presidential candidates that fall. The two houses had disagreed on whether to choose the state's fifteen electors by general election or by districts.[104] Thus, if the state were to cast an electoral college vote, the legislature would have to choose the electors.

The *Aurora*, which had been building momentum for a strong offensive against the Illuminati at the climax of the presidential campaign, suddenly fell strangely silent on the issue in late September. This silence was brought on by the death of John Ogden. Ogden, visiting the Maryland Eastern Shore, was one week sending optimistic reports as to the "surprising and agreeable" political changes that were occurring, and was dead the next week.[105] He died on September 26, 1800, at Chestertown.[106]

Two weeks later Pennsylvania legislative and congressional elections produced a stunning Jeffersonian Republican victory. Re-

101 *Ibid.*, Sept. 11, 1800.
102 *Ibid.*, Sept. 8, 1800.
103 *Ibid.*, Sept. 12, 1800.
104 Harry M. Tinkcom, *The Republicans and Federalists in Pennsylvania* (Harrisburg, 1950), 243–245.
105 *Aurora*, Sept. 20, 1800.
106 *Ibid.*, Oct. 2, 1800.

publicans won fifty-five of seventy-eight seats in the lower house, six of seven vacancies in the upper house and ten of thirteen congressional seats. Federalists, however, retained their majority in the upper house. Thus, when the legislature was called into special session to choose presidential electors, the deadlock of the previous spring continued. The Senate eventually offered a compromise which the Republican-dominated House accepted allowing the selection of eight Republican and seven Federalist electors. The long political contest and the hard-won local victory had produced a slim one-electoral vote advantage for Jefferson and Burr.[107] The neighboring states of New Jersey, Delaware, and Maryland, of which Ogden had painted such a bleak picture, gave Adams and Pinckney fifteen of their twenty electoral votes.

With a multitude of issues and events prevalent during the campaign of 1800, it is very difficult to determine what impact John Ogden's writing for the *Aurora* had upon the electorate. Evidence suggests, however, that the charges made by him achieved wide circulation and were taken seriously in many quarters. Newspapers in Staunton and Richmond, in Easton and Baltimore, in New York, and in New London, carried accounts of Illuminati activities. Donald H. Stewart, after a thorough study, declared that the Republican press "throughout the campaign of 1800 . . . used the term 'Illuminati' as one of ridicule and contempt."[108] Other newspapers, while not entering the Illuminati controversy, nonetheless adopted Ogden's view of Connecticut. The Richmond *Examiner's* reference to Connecticut as "*Priest Ridden*, and muzzled by its prejudices" concisely expressed the image Ogden had been hoping to disseminate.[109]

Federalist newspapers sought to counter the *Aurora*'s articles with their own. John Allen, who regularly wrote Federalist political pieces for the Litchfield *Monitor* and the Hartford *Connecticut Courant*, subscribed to the *Aurora* in order to answer the points that it was raising.[110] The August 30 issue of the *Philadelphia Gazette*

107 Tinkcom, *Republicans and Federalists in Pennsylvania*, 247–252.

108 Stewart, *The Opposition Press*, 415. Stewart cites the Richmond *Virginia Argus*, the Alexandria, Va., *Alexandria Times*, the Charleston, S. C., *City Gazette*, and the *Baltimore American* as examples.

109 Richmond, Va., *Examiner*, Mar. 18, 1800.

110 *Aurora*, Aug. 25, 1800.

launched a sharp attack on Ogden. He was accused of immoral and reprehensible conduct, of neglecting his Christian duties in order to disseminate political views and of authoring a pamphlet "hostile to our government." The *Gazette* claimed, with justification, that Ogden was a regular correspondent of the *Aurora*. Duane rose to Ogden's defense. If Ogden was so immoral, asked the editor, why have his enemies produced no evidence, no single action, to substantiate the insinuation? Denying that Ogden was a "regular" correspondent, Duane conceded nevertheless that Ogden "has been the principle means by which the hypocrisy of the New England Illuminati has been exposed and brought into merited odium."[111]

Political meetings and dinners often included a series of toasts which served as an informal party platform. On June 16, 1800, a gathering at North Farms, New Jersey, celebrated the disbanding of the standing army by offering sixteen toasts, including ones to "the virtuous and patriotic Thomas Jefferson," "the patriotic minority in both houses of Congress," and "the Clerical Illuminati of New-England—May their ambitious views in forming a union between church and state, never be realized." Editor Duane, singled out for "his endeavors to unveil the *secret plots* of a *crafty* aristocracy," received three cheers.[112] A Montgomery County, Pennsylvania, Fourth of July celebration included among its sixteen toasts, "the New England Illuminati—Desolation to such clerical political institutions, which shackle a free people with the tyrannies of priestcraft and aristocracy."[113]

The *Aurora* itself on occasion assessed the impact of this set of issues. In April the paper took credit for throwing "some useful *light* upon the *Illuminati* of *Connecticut*" and for having made Doctors Dwight and Morse "pretty well known throughout the union." The *Aurora* claimed its efforts had restrained a faction in Philadelphia "who were launching into the same bareface prostitution of religion to party views. . . ."[114] An August story suggested that "the publications on these points have opened their eyes, and led the people in a part of the states, to consider their ways and

111 *Ibid.*, Sept. 1, 1800.
112 *Ibid.*, June 30, 1800.
113 *Ibid.*, July 10, 1800.
114 *Ibid.*, Apr. 17, 1800.

consult their duty, interest, and safety." In addition, the counter-attack on the Illuminati had "in some degree done away the clamors, cantings and jealousies about Jefferson's religion."[115] In September the *Aurora* claimed that only the fortuitous uncovering of the Illuminati's "schemes and hypocrisy" had averted a religious war in New England. Although confident that "the Connecticut *Illuminati* from their great head and *high priest* Dr. Dwight down to *Tallmadge* are in the dumps," editor Duane made clear that the way to insure that the New England conspiracy should never again threaten the civil and religious peace was to return John Adams to his native New England.[116]

On election day the *Aurora* published an eleven-point comparison of "Things As They Have Been" under the Federalists and "Things As They Will Be" during a Republican administration. Two of the points in what was, in effect, an unofficial national Jeffersonian Republican Party platform would have greatly pleased John Ogden. In the place of "Priests and Judges incorporated with the Government for political purposes, and equally polluting the holy altars of religion, and the seats of Justice," the Republicans promised "Good government without the aid of priestcraft, or religious politics, and Justice administered without political intolerance." In the place of "An established church, a religious test, and an order of Priesthood," they promised "Religious liberty, the rights of conscience, no priesthood, truth and Jefferson."[117] John C. Ogden's campaign to identify New England Federalists with religious and political intolerance had borne its fruit.

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115 *Ibid.*, Aug. 23, 1800.
116 *Ibid.*, Sept. 1, 1800.
117 *Ibid.*, Oct. 14, 1800.